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The Christmas book

Francis X. Weiser

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Francis X. Weiser : The Christmas book before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Christmas book:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A TRADITIONAL CATHOLIC VIEW OF CHRISTMAS HISTORY AND CUSTOMSBy Steven H ProppFrances Xavier Weiser was a Jesuit associated with Weston College. He also wrote Handbook of Christian Feasts Customs. He wrote in the Foreword to this 1952 book, "I have herein tried to recall the origins and historical significance of these customs and ceremonies with which Christian men surrounded the birthday of their King, with the hope that it will warm the heart and bring closer to all who read it the real significance and meaning of our Christmas customs." (Pg. 8)He observes, "Quite early in the Christian era a popular tradition conferred on the Magi of Bethlehem the title of kings. This tradition... was based on Biblical prophecies which described the conversion of the pagans and, although not referring to the Magi, was applied to their visit..." (Pg. 24)Of Herod's order of the killing of the Holy Innocents, he wrote, "How many children were killed? At times their number has been greatly exaggerated... because at the time of Christ, Bethlehem was a small town or village... the number of boys of two years and under might be around thirty. Most modern scholars consider even this figure too high and put the number at fifteen or twenty victims." (Pg. 28)He asks, "What is the original meaning of our popular greeting, 'Merry Christmas'? When this greeting was originally used... it meant 'blessed, peaceful, pleasant,' expressing spiritual joys rather than earthly happiness... The well-known carol, 'God rest you merry, gentlemen,' is an excellent example... The position of the comma clearly shows the true meaning... is not, 'God rest you, joyful gentlemen,' but, 'God rest you peacefully, gentlemen.'" (Pg. 30)Of the Puritan ban of Christmas, he notes, "When the

old Christmas eventually returned with the restoration of the Monarchy (1660), it was actually a 'new' Christmas. The fine old traditions of religious observance so close to the hearts of all Christians today had disappeared from the homes of England. What was left was a worldly, shallow feast, of amusements and reveling." (Pg. 46)He argues, "The Christmas tree ... is completely Christian in origin and historians have never been able to connect it in any way with ancient Germanic or Asiatic mythology... The origin of the Christmas tree goes back to the medieval German mystery plays. One of the most popular 'mysteries' was the Paradise play, representing ... the sin of Adam and Eve, and their expulsion from Paradise... This made the Paradise play a favorite pageant for Advent... The garden of Eden was indicated by a fir tree hung with apples..." (Pg. 117-118)Although sixty years old, much of the information in this book is "timeless," and still of considerable value to lovers of Christmas today.